

EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TRAINING

SENATE LEGISLATION COMMITTEE - QUESTIONS ON NOTICE 2004-2005 BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING

DEST Question No. E169_05

Senator Carr asked on 2 June 2004, EWRE Hansard page 24.

Question:

During those 40 days (of HIFAR reactor shutdown) what areas of shortage occurred?

Answer:

ANSTO – Importation of Medical Radioisotopes

ANSTO has provided the following response:

In our answer to question E168_05, we advised that Samarium-153 and Chromium-51 were unavailable during the most recent major shutdown of HIFAR. This meant that 35 doses of Quadramet (Samarium-153) and 112 doses of Chromium-51 EDTA were not supplied to medical practitioners. In addition and as advised by Dr Cameron during the Committee hearing, at such times “the nuclear medicine customers ... reschedule their treatments. When they know there are not going to be isotopes available, they do not schedule treatment for that period” (page EWRE 23). Clearly, this course of action is only a short term measure and a full service requires the operation of a research reactor in Australia.

In addition to those delays, there were three significant delays in the importation of Molybdenum-99. Each of those delays resulted in the loss of 22% of the available activity of the shipment – leading in turn to a concomitant reduction in the amount of molybdenum supplied to nuclear medicine practices on those days.